

## DEFINITION OF DIALECTIC

Aristotle view "dialectic" as the counterpart of rhetoric, although what he means by counterpart (antistrophos) remains uncertain. (however, the accepted definition is "finding and discovering all the available arguments or means of persuasion) (pg 437)

E.M. Griffin in A First Look at Communication Theory, states that Plato's ideal discourse was an elite form of dialogue meant for private, rather than public consumption. This philosophic one-on-one mode of communication is known as dialectic (not to be confused with Marx's theory). Unlike typical oratory in Athens, where speakers addressed large audiences on civic issues. Plato's dialectic focused on exploring eternal Truths in an intimate setting.

For Aristotle dialectic is concerned with arguments used in a controversy or discussion with an individual, while rhetoric concerns the orator's technique in addressing a crowd gathered in a public square--a group of people who lack both specialized knowledge and the ability to follow a lengthy chain of argument.

In one respect dialectic differs from rhetoric because the former employs the syllogism and aims certainty, while the latter employs the enthymeme and aims at establishing probabilities.

After Aristotle and throughout the Middle Ages, dialectic was synonymous with formal logic. And then the arguments began. Renaissance teachers of dialectic contended that their discipline was superior to rhetoric, sixteenth century teacher Peter Ramus argued vigorously for the separation of rhetoric from dialectic, and that the invention of arguments should be exclusive to logic, etc., etc., etc.  
(Rhetoric: Concepts, Definition and Boundaries by William A. Covino and David Jolliffe, pg.44)

## DIALECTIC CONTINUED

Because his students were familiar with the question and answer style of Socratic dialogue, Aristotle classified rhetoric as a counterpart or offshoot of dialectic. Dialectic is one on one discussion; rhetoric is one person addressing many.

Dialectic is a search for truth; rhetoric tries to demonstrate truth that's already been found

Dialectic answers general philosophical questions; rhetoric addresses specific, practical ones.

Dialectic deals with certainty; rhetoric deals with probability.

Aristotle saw this last distinction as particularly important:

Rhetoric is the art of discovering ways to make truth seem more probable to an audience that isn't completely convinced.